DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 667 SO 025 534

AUTHOR Birzea, Cesar
TITLE Educational Reform and Educational Research in Central-Eastern Europe: The Case of Romania.
INSTITUTION Institutul de Cercetari Pedagogice, Bucharest (Rumania).
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the IBE International Meeting on "Educational Reform and Educational Research" (Tokyo, Japan, September 1995).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Comparative Education; Developing Nations; Development; Economic Development; *Educational Change; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *International Studies; *Totalitarianism
IDENTIFIERS *Romania

ABSTRACT

This report describes difficulties in educational reform faced by countries in transition, those post-communist countries from Eastern and Central Europe that have been changing their social, economic, and political systems since 1989. Romania is the case study used for this example and is viewed in terms of four stages: (1) deconstruction, an ideological breaking away from the old regimes and institutions; (2) consolidation with the definition of the new legislative framework established; (3) restructuring with economic reforms due to pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; and (4) counter-reform with residual communism still very active. The report identified three specific problems in the struggle for power in Romania that affect even education: (1) stability/breaking off and continuity/change dilemmas; (2) role of ideology in evolving the educational policies; and (3) the relationship between experts and the decision-making process. The experience of the five years of transition shows that communism cannot disappear as suddenly as it was established. Contains 22 references. (EH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

IBE International Meeting on "Educational Reform and Educational Research"

Tokyo, 4–14 September 1995

ucational Reform and Educational Research in Central–Eastern Europe: The Case of Romania

Dr. Cesar Birzea
Director of the Institute
of Educational Sciences
Str. Stirbei Voda 37
RO - 70732 Bucharest
Romania

REPRODUCE THIS
EEN GRANTED BY
birzea

INAL RESOURCES
NTER (ERIC)

NT OF EDUCATION
esearch and Improvement
OURCES INFORMATION
R (ERIC)
s been reproduced as
person or organization

ve been made to
ion quality

opinions stated in this
necessarily represent
tion or policy

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN CENTRAL - EASTERN EUROPE: THE CASE OF ROMANIA

Dr. Cesar Birzea
Director of the Institute
of Education Sciences,
Bucharest

There is a paradox in the educational reforms of **countries in transition**[1]. The official discourse is **less** "reforming" in those countries that experimented with liberal changes in the 70's and 80's during the communist regime (Hungary and Poland). In these countries even the word "reform" is avoided, being prefered "soft" variants such as modernization, restructuring or transformation. By contrast, in those countries where these changes were initiated only after the fall of communism, the official discourse is more radical (Romania, ex-Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Albania). A special case is the Russian Federation where, in spite of the semi-reforms of "perestroika", the political discourse is as radical as in the countries which had no reforms in the '80s.

This paradox does not just represent a semantic compensation but also a political need. In reality, although they speak more or less of identical "revolutions", the year 1989 was not equally dramatic for all the communist countries. The more difficult the breaking off from the old regime, the more efficient was the oppressive apparatus. And thus arises the need for radical reforms as Jacobinical and pugnacious as the dictatorship they had to replace.

Romania is a very good example of this trend. On one hand, the period before 1989 was characterized by decline, degradation and repulsion of any atterence, even, of the word "reform", and, on the other hand, the fall of dictatorship released the people's energies,

---

[1] "**Countries in transition**" are called the post-communist countries from Eastern and Central Europe which after the events of the year 1989 have been changing their social,economic and political system. Transition, here, means the historic process of passing from totalitarianism to democracy. It is a long-term process, lasting for one or two generations (Dahrendorf, 1990) and generating its own culture. It is **the post-totalitarian culture**, an intermediate system between the closed society and the open society of a western type. This hybrid culture is characterized among others by crises, conflicts and uncertainties, by a dramatic co-existence of old and new values, mentalities, institutions and social relations.

supplied hopes and generated projects. In fact, changes could not take place as quickly and spectacularly as they were expected. So, was born a discrepancy between what can be called **an ideology of reform** and the real possibilities of achieving the reforms desired.

Viewed from this perspective, the five years of the post-communist transition in Romania can be characterized by the following stages:

* deconstruction;
* stabilization;
* restructuring;
* counter-reform.

Certainly, these stages refer to educational reform but their duration and contents are different for the other sectors. For instance, the constitutional and political reforms could be relatively rapid achieved in the first two years of transition (1990-1991). The economic and financial reforms are just at their beginning and they might last about 10-15 years. The cultural, moral, and psychological reforms are the most difficult as they view the domain of values, mentalities, competencies, attitudes and social behaviors. The expected length of these reforms will be a minimum of a generation (25 years). The educational reform is **an intersectorial-type reform** with its own dynamics but, at the same time, it depends upon the reforms of other domains: economic, social and cultural. This fact explains, on the one hand, its contradictions and, on the other hand, its relatively long duration of 10-20 years.

1. Deconstruction

The first stage of changes in Romania had a spontaneous and anticommunist character. In the middle of the school year the revolutionary events prompted an abrupt and radical change of educational policy. It was a moment of **ideological breaking away**, of denying the old regime and its institutions. Considering that in Romania of the '80s "a pure and hard communism" was practiced, very similar to the Asian communism and original Stalinism, the changes from December 1989 were much more dramatic and spectacular than in the countries that initiated reforms in the '70s and '80s.

Consequently, the post-totalitarian transition began with destabilizing, breaking off and denial of the communist system.

Under the impact of different pressure groups (pupils and students, parents, teachers, trade

unions, minority groups) the most visible characteristics of communist education have been removed:

* political indoctrination;
* subordonation of education administration to the unique party;
* polytechnic education;
* police control of persons and institutions;
* compulsory use of student labour for production.

This deconstruction stage marked the whole year 1990. Without the benefits of a coherent programme, preliminary studies, or evaluation of the effects, the main changes of the year 1990 were made in the context of an **anti-communist revolt**. Thus, the decisions of this period oversaw the rapid demolishing of the communist system without a sufficiently clear alternative design in the background.

These decisions were assembled as the Governmental Decision of May 1990, which, in the absence of a new Education Act, was at the base of educational organization for the next school year that began in September 1990. The decisions referred to the following aspects:

- the reduction of compulsory schooling from 10 years to 8 years (with an emphasis on the quality and not on the quantity of training);
- the elimination of polytechnic education;
- the reintroduction of academic high schools, a traditional, élitist type, which achieved excellent results during the period before the Second World War. (This type of high school represented 5% of schools during Ceauşescu's time and it increased to 40% in 1992);
- the diversification of secondary education;
- the elimination of the useless examination between the two stages of secondary education (between the tenth and the eleventh grades);
- the reintroduction of specialized post-high school education (two or three years);
- university autonomy;
- the reduction of the number of pupils in a class (the maximum allowed is 36);
- the reduction of hours for teachers from 22 to 18 per week (16 classes in rural areas);
- the possibility of organizing education in the mother tongue for national minorities;
- the diversification of sources for financing education (the involvement of local authorities and enterprises, the introduction of taxes for schooling, the use of unemployment funds for educational purposes);
- the dual subordination of institutions for vocational education (to the Ministry of

Education and to specific ministries);

- the introduction of a new educational plan able to offer all pupils a basic education in the following curriculum areas: humanities and social education, scientific education, physical education, and optional training.

This structure is to be found for all the profiles, sections and schools, even though the curriculum areas are differently covered: for instance, in the humanistic high schools, the humanities and social subjects represent 60%-70% of the total of 30 classes per week, while scientific subjects cover 9%-11%; on the other hand, scientific subjects cover no more than 15%-20% in the humanities profile, rising to 50% for the scientific profile;

- the introduction of optional training with 2 to 4 classes per week;

- the introduction of a first foreign language in the second grade of the primary school and of a second foreign language starting with the fifth grade; within some sections of the humanities profile there is also a third foreign language;

- the introduction of subjects which call for reflection, critical thinking and individual responsibilities, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, civic education and religious education.

2. Stabilization

After the revolutionary enthusiasm of the first six months of transition, after the first free elections (in May 1990), and after the siege of the miners in June 1990 (whose first victims were the students), public interest for education decreased. Attention was drawn to the struggle for power and economic reforms.

Considering this background, the educational policy of the year 1991-1992 was characterized by **consolidation**, namely, by two trends in particular:

a) On the one hand, the decisions taken in 1990 were confirmed and consolidated under the Governmental Decision no 461/1991. Without changing the framework set in 1990, the decision introduced certain innovations still valid at present[1]:

- freedom to organize classes according to alternative educational models (Freinet, Montessori, Petersen, Waldorf);

- special education was returned to the control of the Ministry of Education from that of the State Secretariat for Handicapped Persons;

---

[1] This study was drawn in September 1995.

- higher education is organized in three stages: short-term colleges (courses of 2-3 years), long-term higher education (4-6 years) and postgraduate education (1-2 years);

- diversification of postgraduate education: postgraduate courses (1-12 months), postgraduate schools (1½-2 years) and doctoral studies;

- competitive admission for the second and third cycles of higher education;

- introduction of options in the secondary school curriculum.

b) On the other hand, the main concern of this period of consolidation was **the definition of the new legislative framework**. This process was scheduled in two stages:

First, in November 1991 the new Constitution of Romania was adopted. As the new Education Act has not been voted yet and the 1976 communist law was not officially abrogated, the Constitution is, for the moment, the only fundamental legislative act which refers to education. Article 32 referring to the right to education is of great importance and it stipulates:

- the forms of education (general compulsory schooling, secondary education, vocational training, higher education);
- the language of instruction (Romanian - with the exception of special situations in which education may be carried out in a modern foreign language or in a minority language which has the right to be used as a language of instruction);
- the principle of tax-free state education and the conditions of private education;
- the guarantee of university autonomy;
- the freedom of religious education within state schools.

Secondly, in 1992 the Ministry of Education suggested a draft of the Education Act which was publicly debated. This draft raised a great deal of interest represented by more than 10,000 recommended amendments from teachers, trade-unions, non-governmental organizations, political opposition, and professional associations. This diversity in points of view considerably delayed the adoption of the new education bill. So, presently, Romanian schooling takes place in accordance with the Governments annual decisions (which reiterate the 8+4 structure outlined in 1990). According to the article 72 of Constitution of Romania, the Education Act is an organic law which cannot be adopted but by a majority of votes in both Chambers of the Parliament, a fact that implies negotiations and at least minimal consensus. This special legislative status partially explains the delay and political disputes around the draft Education Act proposed by the Government.

3. Restructuring

Beginning in 1993, the educational policy in Romania was influenced by the following political options:

On one side, under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, some measures were taken to launch the economic reform:

- liberalization of prices and lowering of customs barriers;
- re-balancing of public expenditure, principally through reduction of subsidies;
- gradual convertibility of national currency;
- strict monetary policy with high interest rates;
- creation of new business that are more competitive on the international market;
- extension of small scale privatization of major "socialist" companies.

On the other side, the association of Romania to the European Union was adopted as a priority in all domains of policy. This decision led to the restructuring of all institutions and the beginning of their adjustment towards Western European standards.

Beginning in 1993, these measures had the following effects:

a) re-launching **public interest** in education;

b) adoption of **the first legislative text** in the field of education[1];

c) definition of **a coherent policy** for education.

This educational policy is defined by the following framework-documents, designed in 1993:

- "The Reform of Education in Romania: Conditions and Perspectives" or the "White Paper" of the Romanian education system, elaborated by a team of experts at the Institute of Education Sciences.

- "Higher Education Reform in Romania" - elaborated by the Consultative Group for Higher Education and Research.

---

[1] The Law for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions was adopted in emergency proceedings in November 1993. This law was necessary even before the general Education Act because of the unique situation which evolved in the first six post-revolutionary months (January - July 1990). Due to an anarchic erruption of request to open new institutions, Romania attained the European record with 75 private universities, the majority of them operating with minimal resources. The Accreditation Law set minimum conditions for all the institutions founded after January 1990. The National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation was created to administer this standard.

- The World Bank Project for the reform of pre-university education.
- The PHARE Program for the reform of vocational education in Romania.

In 1993 and based on these documents, the Government and the Parliament adopted a programme for educational reform scheduled up to the end of the century. This programme has the following goals:

1) The decentralization of educational administration by:

a) passing some of the responsabilities to the lower levels of pre-universitary education (inspectorates, houses of the teaching staff, school directors);

b) increasing university autonomy and the accountability of educational units, through a system involving greater public responsability and efficient use of resources;

c) creating participative leadership boards including representatives of local authorities, economic agents, parents, etc.

2) The modernization and diversification of the system of financing education, ensuring financial autonomy of educational units.

3) Reorganizing the teacher training system.

4) Restructuring technical and vocational secondary education through: the simplification of the training routes reducing and adapting the subject matter, ensuring a common core for general training in all secondary schools.

5) Changing the curricula at all levels of the education system.

6) The abolition of the state monopoly over textbooks and the liberalization of the educational publishing market by giving up the idea of the unique textbook and changing the subsidizing system for textbooks for the direct benefit of families and educational units.

7) The reform of higher education especially in the following directions: the change of the relationship between central administration leadership and universities, the stimulation of institutional autonomy, academic evaluation and the accreditation of institutions and programs of study, introducing new financing mechanisms.

The key-element in this programme is cooperation with the World Bank. It is interesting to note here a significant paradox. The World Bank project, based upon a neo-liberal ideology

and structural adjustment policy was initiated and voted by the Romanian parliamentary coalition of nationalist, populist and neo-communist parties. This option was in contradiction with the protectionist and autarchic programme with which these parties won the voters. Indeed, the liberal and pro-occidental parties voted against the World Bank project. This paradox says much about the political consistency and coherence of the ideological options of the countries in transition.

4. Counter-reform

Against any semblance, which may reach outside analysts, **residual communism** is still very active.

It persists in the form of collectivist and egalitarian mentalities, despotic and totalitarian reflexes, fear and inner exile, paternalist behaviour, and unconditional subjection to State and Leader. Beside these spontaneous and unconscious forms, communism also manifests itself in open institutional ways benefiting from advantages brought by democracy and the difficulties of the transition period. Communist restoration has apperead in many Central-Eastern European countries (Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria) on the democratic road of free elections. Even though this movement has no real chance of bringing a return to the old regime it may block or slow down the pace of reform.

In Romania, after the elections of 1992, the populist, nationalist and neo-communist parties increased their percentage so that no governmental coalition can be formed without these parties. It is a paradox of democracy in the context of an underdeveloped political culture, that democratic processes may serve neo-communist factions and activities.

So, the ex-court poets of Ceausescu were freely elected for the Parliament and have key-positions in culture and media administration. The "Securitate" officers and the communist party leaders have become honorable owners of banks, enterprises and newspapers. Driven away by the students in the first post-revolutionary months, the political activists and professors of Marxism have regrouped in private universities undermining the state universities with the costly transfers of equipment, competencies and projects. Thus, the ex-chief of personnel in the Ministry of Education, a member of the Ceausescu clan, has organized his own university and foundation, naming it after Spiru Haret, the prestigious pre-communist founder of Romanian education. This university has even created its own educational research institute. Similarly, teachers from disbanded Communist Party School

(Academy "Stefan Gheorghiu") have become members of parliament and lead management, political studies and journalism schools, and key-institutions in this struggle for power.

Taking advantage of the difficulties of transition, the ex-leaders of education have re-appeared as the nation's savers, openly propagating the superiority of education before 1989. This movement has at its disposal a private publication ("Tribuna Invatamantului") that has the monopoly over the educational newspapers. This newspaper focuses its coverage on the following topics:

a) the **need for stability** - the 1990 changes unsettled the efficient system of education that could provide a basic education for all; the reforms that are in the making can but worsen teachers'status;

b) **national pride** - the World Bank project is similar to those for the third world; Romania does not need technical assistance as she is an industrialized country with her own capacities and expertise;

c) **suspicion of foreigners** - the opening up towards the West has brought no visible advantages as it has brought with it only Western crises and vices and not its advantages; in complicity with native authorities, the Occident just wants to transform Romania into a colony:

d) **compromising home based reformers** - in fact, the reformers do not carry the experience and weight of the ex-managers of the education system; they are rather a group of adventurers, fascinated by the Occident's mirage, disciples of models that do not fit to the "special" situation of Romania;

e) **discrediting educational research** - as the miners said "we work, we do not think" so is the new distinction between researchers and practitioners: the former undertake unfruitful, extravagant and expensive activities, while the real work is developed by the mass of the teachers. Thus, one of the campaigns of the newspaper "Tribuna Invatamantului" focuses on the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for two reasons:

- IES is the author of a critical report on the Romanian education system ("The White Paper") on which the reform programme launched in 1993 was based;

- IES is a symbol of victimization during the Ceausescu regime (we shall detail this

aspect later).

In forefront of these contradictory trends, the Government has chosen **a systemic reform strategy**, which is a generic reform, scheduled for 5-10 years and imposed from top to bottom. To be more precise, it has the following characteristics:

1. **Simultaneous change** of all components and levels, mainly of:

a) secondary education, vocational and higher education;
b) curricula and teacher training, evaluation and occupational standards.

2. **State and central structures** keep their important role. Even if they make efforts in deconcentration, the educational policy is still directed by the Ministry of Education and the 41 District Educational Inspectorates. The Romanian educational system remains centralized, i.e. most decisions (concerning planning, curriculum development, examination and school organization) are taken at a central level. Even the operational structures created for the World Bank and PHARE projects are controlled by the Ministry of Education, namely, by the Curriculum and Teacher Training Commission, the Commission for the Vocational Education Reform, etc.

3. **Encouraging the participation of the new actors in the reform process**. Though decision-making structures remain centralized and bureaucratic, there is a growing diversity of actors. Decisions are no longer exclusively made in one centre of control and propagated as a shock wave towards the outskirts of administration. New participants in the reform process are present at all levels:

- governmental offices, parliamentary commissions, offices within the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Youth and Ministry of Culture;
- expertise supplied by the research institutes, universities and specialized centres;
- press, especially local radio and TV broadcasting;
- education trade unions;
- youth and parents'associations;
- professional associations (e.g. the Association of Mathematicians, and the Association of Language Teachers);
- NGOs on specific problems: education of children with special needs, minorities rights, women education, etc.;
- private and alternative education (e.g. alternative schools, such as Jena, Waldorf,

Freinet, Montessori).

4. **Innovative centres** are being created within the present system to act as real focuses of change. The intention here is to support innovations based upon the neo-liberal ideology and structural adjustement policy imposed by the World Bank that expects a real launching of the "**reform through infusion**". These nuclei of the market economy have already been active since 1995 and will be fully operational beginning with the year 2000:

a) **Liberalization of the educational market**
In accordance with the project financed by the World Bank, all pre-university curricula will be changed by 1997. Meanwhile, new textbooks will be created so that 250 new titles (textbooks for the first year of primary education were developed in 1994, and those for the second year of study will be developed in 1995) may appear by the year 2000. Conforming to the new procedure, after the Ministry of Education publishes the official programmes of study for each subject, the publishing houses take part in an open tender. An expert commission appointed by the Ministry of Education selects three alternatives of a textbook for each curriculum subject. Each school is free to choose one or other of these textbooks.

Considering the price of textbooks prohibitive, the state will partially subsidy each school that acquires the necessary textbooks. Till now, the subsidies were allotted directly to the unique State educational publishing house. This protected publishing house was administrated by the Ministry of Education so that it was subjected to no competition: the unique textbook was printed and acquired directly by the State-owner.

b) **Self-regulation through quality control**. Traditionally, all exams and assessment was central, organized by the Ministry of Education. In conformity with the reform project, a National Office of Evaluation and Examination is to become operative from 1998 and is organized outside the Ministry of Education to meet the market economy principle. The assessment tests will be developed by this specialized agency and sold directly to those institutions that organize examinations: inspectorates, schools, and universities.

c) **The participation of owners of private industry and trade unions in defining occupational standards**. A more flexible mechanism based on marketing will be gradually adopted replacing the central planning of the distribution of the labour force and vocational training structures.

The Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment (COSA) is created in order to

ensure at least minimal participation by interested parties. It is an autonomous organism consisting of:

- representatives of the main private companies;
- representatives of trade unions;
- representatives of Government (Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education).

This organism is responsible for defining the common standards both for job specifications and vocational education so that training should frame the future labour request. Beside this balancy of supply and demand, COSA also has the role of simplifying and modernizing classification of job types. So, by the year 2000, there must be defined the standards for about 300 occupations.

4. Finally, another characteristic of systemic reform in Romania is the use of **support centres of excellence** in the educational system:

- expertise located in universities and specialized centres;
- teachers'school based innovations;
- traditions of anti-war education;
- educational research and information.

In this way, according to the principle of **reform through infusion**, the Romanian Government has organized an entire institutional network of change that includes:

- governmental commissions and offices;
- a coordinating inspector of reform at each of the 41 districts in Romania;
- 41 local agencies for reform called Teachers'Houses;
- a pilot school network distributed all over the country.

The critics of this strategy say that this innovation structure, bolted onto the old system, can only have a cosmetic effect and can only influnce a group of elite. In reality, the system will operate at two different speeds leading to two **parallel reforms**:

- one radical and exhaustive reform foreseen in the official discourse, and
- another reform, slow and fragmented, at the operational level, developed in accordance with available resources and actors'real reasoning.

There is nothing new in affirming that in the framework of this system the **contribution of educational research** is essential. What is special about the conditions prevaling in Romanian educational research is its status as a **political change indicator**. This status might not be found anywhere else in any country of Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, in all post-communist countries educational research detached itself from ideology, became more pragmatic and was directly connected to the reform projects. Unlike other countries that restructured or closed the old institutions of educational research (Bulgaria, Poland, Russia) or preserved the old ones (Hungary, Slovenia),or created new ones, connected with the new national identities (Ukraine, Moldavia, the Baltic countries), in Romania educational research benefits from a privileged status owing to the **guilty complex** of the political authorities. Unlike other Eastern European countries, where the educational research played a modest part among the ideological disciplines as a whole, in Romania it had "the privilege" to be in the centre of attention from the authorities in a political frame-up at a national level, we can say. This is **a unique example of political power using educational research**.

In a more systematic way, we can identify the following stages in **the evolution of educational research in Romania**:

1. **The period before 1945**

The educational research was developed in parallel with other efforts to modernize of Romanian society in the inter-war period. It was developed in universities and their affiliated structures:

- The Experimental Pedagogy and Psychology Laboratory at the University of Cluj, founded by Ghidionescu in 1925;

- The Romanian Pedagogical Institute, founded within the University of Bucharest by G.G. Antonescu in 1926;

- The Forum for Experimental Pedagogical Studies at the University of Bucharest, founded by Brandza, Muster, and Sulea-Firu in 1932;

- The National Institute of Pedagogy and Education, founded by Onisifor Ghibu at Sibiu in 1943.

2. The period 1945 - 1965

As soon as communism was installed, educational research was suspended for a period of almost 10 years. It was resumed in 1952 when the Institute of Pedagogical Sciences was created under the Ministry of Education. As mentioned in the setting up decision, this institute had "to implement the experience of the Soviet pedagogical school, the most progressive in the world". The specialists trained in the USSR who formed the majority of the personnel strove to strictly meet those provisions leading to expected results. Educational research, traditionally developed in universities concentrated on a powerful ideological core controlled directly by the governing party.

3. The period 1965 - 1971

This was the short period of Romanian "perestroika" when Ceausescu (in office since 1965) got closer to the Western countries in order to consolidate his independence from Moscow.

The new regime encouraged research in social and human sciences who were asked to legitimate the new political trend (for example, history became one of the key factors in the nationalist movement of the new political leadership). The best teachers and researchers who were imprisoned at the end of '40s have been released and transferred directly to the psychological and educational research institutes: Margineanu, Nestor, Herseni, Bontila, Neamtzu, Krasnaseschi. New specialized centres were created to run in parallel with the Institute of Pedagogical Sciences:

- The Laboratory of Educational Analysis and Prognosis;
- The Laboratory of Experimental Didactics;
- The Laboratory for Educational Planning;
- The Research Centre for Vocational Training.

4. The period 1971 -1982

After a visit to China, Ceausescu was so impressed with the cultural revolution in this country that in June 1971 he started his own ideological-cultural revolution. Consequently, a large campaign of ideological purification of institutions, school textbooks and political structures was put in progress. Educational research was directly affected by this new trend in politics. The small specialized centres were closed, the pro-western direction of the

late'60s was halted and the educational research again became an enterprise of ideological inculcation. Meanwhile, the professionals trained in Western universities were isolated and replaced with "professional revolutionists". On his way of building an "original democracy", Ceausescu dismissed any possible of deviation from national communism. Beginning in 1977 and in order to control this important activity, education was declared an ideological sector and was directly controlled by Elena Ceausescu.

As they could be possible competitors with the official ideology, the social sciences were practically suppressed. The psychology, sociology and education chairs were closed and training in these fields was replaced by a political polyvalent training called "philosophy". The research field was gradually reduced under the auspices of reducing personnel or institutional fusion. The Institute of Pedagogical Sciences merged first with the Institute of Psychology, becoming the Institute for Educational and Psychological Researches (1975), then with the Central Institute of Teacher Training (1977). Educational publications vanished as well as the import of western documentation.

5. **The period 1982 - 1989**

But Ceausescu was not content with this marginalisation process and ideological pervertion of educational research. An advocate of preventive measures, against the background of the "Solidarnosc Syndrom" (that led to the dangerous alliance of intellectuals and workers in Poland), Ceausescu organized a political framework having as its epicentre the Institute for Educational and Psychological Researches. Based on some common-place experimentation influenced by Oriental psychotherapy, researchers were accused of membership of a universal religious sect that undermined public order. This led to the closure of the Institute for Educational and Psychological Researches in June 1982. For their ideological purification, the researchers were employed as unskilled workers in the big communist plants.

There followed a campaign against intellectuals that affected all areas of culture. Under the pretext of the "Transcendental Meditation Gate" intellectuals were compromised, and ridiculied, and marginalised: they were dabbling in esoteric extravagancies while workers bore the country's hardship. As a climax of paranoia, the words "psychology" and "education" were forbidden in the official language.

6. The period after 1990

The political changes initiated after Ceausescu's fall in December 1989 led to a **revival of educational research** in Romania. Not only was educational research rehabilitated but it also received a **privileged status**:

On the one hand, the abolition of activities in this field in the '80s and the ambitious programme of reform launched after 1990 increased **the need for expertise and educational information**. As a consequence, one of the first measures taken by the new political authorities was the setting up of the Institute of Education Sciences in January 1990. In March 1990 the Institute of Psychology was set up, too, and in September 1990 the psychology, pedagogy and sociology chairs were re-opened. The importation of educational documentation is re-established and training abroad in these fields is encouraged. Specialized centres and laboratories are set up beside the main Romanian universities. Against the background of this new social need for expertise and information, educational research is encouraged and solicited in decision-making while its practioners began to enjoy greater social prestige and more of the necessary resources.

On the other hand, this special attention to educational research in Romania might also be the result of **a guilty complex** on the part of the political authorities. After almost a decade of an irrational attitude, hate and the exclusion of experts, of burning the specialist books, the educational research has become a **symbol of communist victimization**. That is why, re-launching educational research was considered one of the first signs of normalizing the political situation in Romania.

Against the background of the Ministry of Education preocupation with decentralization, most of the tasks concerning design, experiment and evaluation of the reform programme have been taken over by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Although it was created as a compensatory measure against the communist abuses, IES did not revive personnel and projects of the institute that was dissolved in 1982. Young specialists working in universities or schools were employed after they passed a national competitive examination. In the absence of specialists in these fields (the first graduates of psychology, educational sciences and sociology faculties re-created in 1990 will be available in the summer of 1995) specialists were employed from all educational domains: linguistics, economics, mathematics, informatics, biology (hence the syntagm "education sciences" used to name this institute).

The Institute of Education Sciences has headquarters in Bucharest (and as a climax of irony

it is placed in an ex office of the "Securitate", which organized the "Transcendental Meditation Gate") and offices in the main university centres - Cluj, Iasi, and Timisoara.

*
* *

For many decades the Central and Eastern European population waited for communism fall. They hoped that the suppression of the three strands of totalitarianism (ideology of the unique party, political police and State dictatorship) would automatically lead to another social order similar to that of Western Europe.

Unfortunately, the experience of the **five years of transition** shows that communism cannot disappear as suddenly as it was established. Even though during these years constitutional, political and economic reforms have been accomplished, what may be called **residual communism**, still persistes. It is particularly felt in the field of social behaviours, mentalities and attitudes.

As a paradox, democracy proves to be a favourable framework where all options are possible, including those for the residual communism. Taking advantage of the discontentment created by the transition difficulties, lack of political culture on the part of population and the permissive mechanisms of democracy, the crypto-communist parties (under the mask of socialist or social-democratic titles or coalitions) can have access again to power by democratic elections.

The effects of the **struggle for power** that characterize the post-communist transition are felt in **education**, too. In this sense, starting from the case of Romania our study revealed three specific problems:

* stability/breaking off and continuity/change dilemmas;
* role of ideology in evolving the educational policies;
* relationship between experts and the decision-making process (especially the relationship between educational research and educational changes).

These three aspects seem to characterize the present evolution of the Central and Eastern European countries. Our analysis refers mainly to the case of Romania, especially viewed in terms of three issues: **breaking-off/continuity; ideologic opportunism and the dramatic need for investment in human resources**.

Considering some of the links we have tried to emphasize, the conclusions of this analysis may also be valid for other countries in transition.

1. Transition dilemmas

One of the external analysts'errors has been to consider "the Eastern block" as a compact, homogeneous entity. In reality, this term covered a large variety of peoples, cultures, languages, religious, traditions and historic experiences. This variety explains the great diversity of models and problems to be solved following the changes of 1989. Some countries had tried economic reforms by the '70s within the communist regime while others passed directly from classic Stalinism to political democracy.

For this reason, the problem of **continuity** and **stability**, on the one hand, and **breaking-off** and **change**, on the other hand, has different significances from one country to another. The countries that tried a limited liberalization inside the communist system had to face the problem of continuity and finalisation of the "semi-reforms" (Anweiler) of the '70s. The elimination of ideologic control over curricula was most marked in Hungary after 1978 and where in 1985 educational administration was decentralised. In this country they talk of change, transformation or modernization but not reform. In other countries, such as Poland, the reforms proposed in the 1980s by "Solidarnosc" are only just at present put into practice under favourable political conditions. In other countries, such as Romania, where paroxistic and ultranationalist totalitarianism was a feature of the '80s, the year 1989 imposed the first stage in a spectacular breaking with the old regime, followed by a slowing down of the educational reform and even the development of a **counter-reform movement** on the part of the neo-communist, populist and nationalist parties. Finally, during the five years of post-communist transition there have been moments of denouncing and denial of reforms started. This is the case of ex-Czechoslovakia and the Russian Federation where they speak about of **"a reform of reforms"**, of reforms to correct the initial reforms.

2. The role of ideology

The communist model of education is relatively simple. It is based upon the equation: **one** party → **one** ideology → **one** nation → **one** educational system → **one** curriculum → **one** textbook → **new man**.

After the fall of communism, the official forbidding of Marxism - Leninism left an **ideological void** which is served by a multitude of political movements and groups (for example, in Bulgaria there are over 100 political parties). In the new countries created after breaking up with communist federations, **nationalism** has become a state ideology. In others, anti-war traditions and doctrines were reactivated, explained through the nostalgic feeling of "lost paradise" **(neo-traditionalism, orthodoxism, Magyarism, pan-Slavism, etc.)**. In other countries, negation of Marxism determined a sudden switch to the opposite pole of the political spectrum and adoption of **neo-liberalism** as official doctrine. For instance, after some years, the 1988 Thatcherist reform began to be contested in Great Britain, but it has been taken as an inspiration in some countries of Central Europe. At last, especially in the countries of Eastern Europe where the role of the State and social protection privail, they speak mainly of **social-democracy**. Even though the word **"socialism"** is avoided, the simple reference to "Swedish model", "Spanish model", or "the social market economy" is not convincing. There are only verbal labels that cover a confused and contradictory situation where many of the old regime practices still persist (for example, the State propriety over the big bankrupt enterprises).

The case of Romania gives us a good opportunity to draw interesting conclusions regarding **the role of ideology in the new educational policies**. On the one side, the governing ideology is social- democracy, at least as this word is understood and applied in Central and Eastern Europe. On the other side, under the pressure of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, new innovations have been adopted starting from a neo-liberal ideology and market economy principle. Finally, regardless of ideological correctness of these measures, the educational reform in Romania will be imposed from top to bottom, with the essential contribution of the State and centralized structures.

3. Experts contribution

Acknowledging the need for expertise and the indispensable role of "intelligentsia" is one of the most important acquisitions of the post-communist transition. Before 1989, intellectuals were regarded with suspicion and even hostility. Their ability for autonomous thinking and their possible influence over workers made the intellectual an uncertain partner who had to be permanently supervised, manipulated and intimidated.

"The Transcendental Meditation Gate" in Romania to which we referred in our study, is a typical example of intellectual repression and **negative use of educational research**. This

may be a unique case in the history of universal education when power used educational research as a scape-goat and pretext for a vast political diversion. A victim of a "witch hunting" that justified the "cultural revolution" of the '80s, educational research in Ceausescu's Romania was subjected to some unprecedent repressions: experts were sent to forced labour and employed as unskilled workers, educational papers were destroyed, experts' access into schools was forbidden (not to ideologically contaminate the teaching staff), trials for the public conviction of the heretics were framed, even the words "psychology" and "education" were forbidden in the official language.

Obviously, it was an extreme case. But it shows us how vulnerable is the experts'status in a totalitarian regime and how selfish power can be in relation to intellectuals.

The case of Romania in '80s shows that, especially in countries where the Law is deficient, the educational research needs **protection and guarantee of autonomy**.

Maybe, if international organizations had been more efficient and better disposed to protection mechanisms of the intellectual work, the dramatic case of the "Transcendental Meditation" and other "cultural revolutions" would not have taken place. Unfortunately, the international organizations, and the professional associations as well, did not react against the barbarian treatment that a dictatorship applied to its own educational research.

In the absence of some more efficient mechanisms and indulging in sterile approaches, the international community tolerate such situations. Under such conditions, even if the situation is radically changed in the Central and Eastern European countries, the anomalous case mentioned above may reoccur anytime in any of the numerous dictatorships that still are in power in other regions of the world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANWEILER, O., *Some Historical Aspects of Educational Change in the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.* **Oxford Studies in Comparative Education**, 1992, vol.2., No. 1, pp.29-39.

BÎRZEA, C., *Educational Policies of the Countries in Transition.* Strasbourg, Council of Europe Press, 1994.

BÎRZEA, C., *Curriculum Reform in Central and Eastern Europe.* In: P. Heywood, K. Wain, J. Calleja (eds) **Research into Secondary School Curricula**, Lisse, Swets and Zeitlinger, 1994, pp. 108-115.

BÎRZEA, C., *Educational Reform in Romania: Conditions, Strategy and Implementation.* **East/West Education**, 1994, vol.15, No.1, pp.37-42.

BÎRZEA, C., *Educational Research in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Problems and Future Prospects.* In: L. Edwards, P. Munn, K. Fogelman (eds.) **Education for Democratic Citizenship in Europe. New Challenges for Secondary Education**, Lisse, Swets and Zeitlinger, 1994, pp.25-29.

BÎRZEA, C., *Educational Research in Romania.* In: J. Calderhead (ed.) **Educational Research in Europe**, Clevedon - Philadelphia, Multilingual Matters, 1994, pp.41-44.

CERYCH, L., *Renewal of Central European Higher Education: Issues and Challenges.* **European Journal of Education**, 1990, vol.25, No.4., pp.351-359.

DAHRENDORF, R., *Reflexions on the Revolution in Europe.* London, Chatto and Windus, 1990.

DARVAS, P., TIBBITS, F., *Educational Change in Central Eastern Europe: Tradition, Context and New Actors. The Case of Hungary.* In: A. Tjeldvoll (ed.) **Education in East/Central Europe 1991**, Oslo, University of Oslo/Educational Leadership International, 1992, pp.215-237.

GILBERT, T., *Nationalism and Communism in Romania: The Rise and Fall of Ceausescu's Personal Dictatorship.* Boulder, Westview Press, 1990.

HEYNEMAN, S.P., *Education in the Europe and Central Asia Region: Policies of Adjustment and Excellence.* Washington D.C., The World Bank, 1994.

KAUFMAN, C., *De-Sovietizing Educational Systems. Learning from the Past Policy and Practice.* **International Review of Education**, 1994, vol.40, No.2, pp.149-158.

KOTASEK, J., *Visions of Educational Development in the Post-Socialist Era.* **International Review of Education**, 1993, vol.39, No.6, pp.473-487.

MIHĂILESCU, I., VLĂSCEANU, L., ZAMFIR, C., *Higher Education Reform in Romania. A Study.* Bucharest, CEPES, 1994.

MITTER, W., *Education in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in a Period of Revolutionary Change.* In: W. Mitter, M. Weiss, U. Schaefer (eds.) **Recent Trends in Eastern European Education**, Frankfurt am Main, German Institute for International Educational Research, 1992, pp.121-136.

PANKHURST, K., *Education and Cultural Changes in Eastern Europe.* In: **Democratisation and Reform of Secondary Education in Central and Eastern Europe**, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1993, pp.21-30.

PASTUOVIC, N., *Problems of Reforming Educational Systems in Post-Communist Countries.* **International Review of Education**, 1993, vol.39, No.5, pp.405-418.

SADLAK, J., *Romania: Forming and Reforming of the Country's System of Education.* In: **Education Reform and Policy in East-Central Europe,** New York, Garland Publishing, 1995.

SADLAK, J., *Higher Education Reform in Romania: Challenges and Responses.* In: K. Hüfner (ed.) **Higher Education Reform Processes in Central and Eastern Europe**, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1995, pp.217-233.

SANDI, A.M., *Process of Educational Changes in Romania.* **Oxford Studies in Comparative Education**, 1992, vol.2, No.1, pp.83-93.

TJELDVOLL, A., *Ideological Changes and Educational Consequences. Eastern Europe after 1989.* In: A. Tjeldvoll (ed.) **Education in East/Central Europe 1991**, Oslo, University of Oslo/Educational Leadership International, 1992, pp.29-38.

VON KOPP, B., *Global Changes and the Context of Education, Democracy and Development in Eastern Europe.* In: W. Mitter, U. Schäfer (eds) **Upheaval and Change in Education**, Frankfurt am Main, German Institute for International Educational Research, 1993, pp.85-98.